of water at the boiling temperature, the article would not be in its most acceptable form.

We do not regard the small objections implied in the above citations as especially applicable to the work before us, because the same and analogous imperfections exist in most if not in all treatises on materia medica, not excepting even the classic works of Pereira, Royle, Wood and Bache, and others. Yet, in our humble judgment, the practice of medicine would gain something by having students taught, while they are learning materia medica, the methods and forms of administering medicines, especially such as require peculiar manipulation to render them fit to be offered to the lips of the patient. In cities where there are skilful druggists and expert nurses, it may be enough that the physician name the article and dose he deems proper for his patient. But in the country, in rural districts, in the army and navy, practitioners are required to be able to give detailed and minute directions not only about the administration of medicines, but also about the preparation of diet for the sick, and if they are ignorant of these details, upon the proper execution of which the comfort of the patient and success of treatment so often depend, there is no one at hand to supply the needful though simple information.

It is a fashion to overlook in medical descriptions, the unvarying standards of weight and measure which have been established and to take those which are uncertain, vague and changing. The fruit of colocynth is said to be "the size of a small orange," for example, yet the orange which would be called small in Brazil would be termed large in China: oranges may be from one and a half to four and a half and five inches in diameter and not be either small or large in comparison with those grown in the same locality. Similar remarks are applicable to the phrases "big as a hickory-nut," "big as the end of my thumb," "the size of a filbert," "big as an apple," and "high as Christ-church steeple," which was a classic unit of measure of height among the earlier citizens of Philadelphia.

Teachers of the science and art of medicine and surgery might abandon this fashion, advantageously for students, and apply the established standards of weight and measure instead. It seems preferable, even if nothing be actually gained, to direct that a dose shall be administered in a stated number of ounces or other uniform measure, than to employ the too common expressions, in "some" or "a little water," or "largely reduced," "slightly diluted," &c. But, it is believed that precise teaching in these apparently unimportant details is calculated to impress on the mind of the student the habit of being accurate in whatever relates to the art of prescribing and administering medicines.

The "Materia Medica for Students" is well written, clearly printed, and the twenty-four illustrations, though not very elegant specimens of the wood-engraver's art, fairly represent the general aspect of the plants they are designed to portray. It will be found a useful hand-book, by those students especially who may be under the instruction of its able and accomplished author.

W. S. W. R.

ART. XXI.—*On the Direct Influence of Medicinal and Morbific Agents upon the Muscular Tissue of the Bloodvessels.* By R. CRESSON STILES, M. D., etc. "Non fingendum, aut excogitandum, sed inveniendum." Read before the King's County Medical Society, Brooklyn, March 21, 1865. 8vo. pp. 26. New York, 1865.

WE have failed to discover whether Dr. Stiles, in attempting to show that the action of morbific agents—in the production of disease and that of remedial agents in its arrest—is exerted, through the medium of the blood, upon the muscular tissue of the bloodvessels, would restrict this to certain forms of disease, and to particular morbific and therapeutic agents, or extend it to all agents by which disease in every instance is induced, and, when induced, is either arrested in its course or conducted to a favourable issue. In the exposition of his views

Dr. Stiles has not observed that clearness and precision which are essential to a correct understanding of them in all their bearings.

It is very certain that Dr. Stiles believes the morbific matter, whatever this may be, to which the production of every form of fever is due, enters into, or is generated in the blood; and that the blood thus poisoned, by its action upon the bloodvessels, causes a general relaxation of their muscular tissue, and, in consequence, an augmented pressure in the arterioles and capillaries, with an increased rapidity of the circulation generally.

Fever is defined by Dr. Stiles to be "an acute morbid activity of the general circulation and vital combustion, caused by the direct action of a blood poison upon the muscular tissue of the bloodvessels." Increased activity of the circulation is generally, he remarks, regarded as the fundamental element of the febrile state, the remaining phenomena of fever being its natural results, or mere concomitants. He associates, he informs us, with the expression "*vital combustion,*" no theory of animal heat, but would simply indicate the symptom from which fever derives its name.

Dr. Stiles has endeavoured to show—and it appears to us not without success —1. That no simply nervous theory is adequate to furnish an explanation of febrile phenomena; 2. That febrile phenomena cannot be explained alone by simply increased activity of the heart; and, 3. That the nervous disturbances exhibited in every case of fever are secondary or coincident, not fundamental and essential.

"The cause of the fever may lie, indirectly, in severe mental strain, or in some overpowering sorrow; the cause may persist in all its force when the fever is aroused, and, happily, often removes the system from nervous sway, and saves a life which would otherwise fail to sustain the nervous tension. A blood poison has been produced through the agency of the nervous system, which, by acting on the muscular tissue, has released the system from nervous control, and generated the fever. The admission of such an element is a necessity, for 'fever is more than the resilience of a bowed-down system,' and is warranted by the fact that the production of vitiated fluids through nervous agency is a matter of not unusual observation."

The essay of Dr. Stiles, though very far from being conclusive as to the validity of the leading views advanced in it, is nevertheless highly suggestive throughout, and may be studied with profit. Even though it lead not to the adoption of the views advanced in respect to the mode of action of morbific and curative agents, nor of the theory of the causation of fever set forth, yet there are some observations in the essay which are calculated to improve our knowledge of the etiology and therapeutics of the class of febrile diseases.

D. F. C.

ART. XXII.—*Obscure Diseases of the Brain and Mind.* By FORBES WINSLOW, M.D., D.C.L., Oxon, etc. etc. etc. Second American, from the Third and Revised English Edition. 8vo. pp. 348. Philadelphia: Henry C. Lea, 1866.

THE author of this work, by his numerous writings, among which we may enumerate the Lettsomian Lectures before the College of Physicians on *The Psychological Vocation of the Physician,* his essays *On the Medical Treatment of Insanity,* on *Medico-legal Evidence in Cases of Insanity; The Anatomy of Suicide; The Plea of Insanity in Criminal Cases,* his *Psychological Journal,* and the volume now under notice; has given an immense impulse to the study of insanity, and contributed largely to the elucidation of mental disorders, particularly those of an obscure character, and which had previously been too commonly overlooked. By unravelling the phenomena of mind in its natural state, he has led the way to a better knowledge of its diseased condition, and to the recognition of the premonitory symptoms—the *incubation,* as he calls it—of insanity.